On Edge: There's a $1,000,000 Bounty on His Head and He Can't go Home

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By Jan Wondra December 22, 2020

Dr. Eric Coomer talks about preparing for the 2020 Election in the shadow of COVID-19, and What it's Like to Have a $1,000,000 Bounty on His Head

In a year already filled with the ridiculous, the frightening, the unjust, Dr. Eric Coomer expected some controversy over the 2020 election. But what happened was far beyond what he could have imagined.

"I was just doing my job," explained Coomer who is the Vice President of Product Strategy for Dominion Voting Systems. "It's been absolutely horrible … it's completely upended my entire life. My day-to-day life is nothing like it was and probably never will be again. These kinds of conspiracies – this will not die down. It's out there. They have stated they never want me to have a day of peace."

Dr. Eric Coomer, Vice President of Product Strategy for Dominion Voting Systems had to keep traveling as the COVID-19 pandemic surged, to prepare for the 2020 election. Now, due to death threats, he is in hiding. Courtesy photo.

Dominion, the company for which Coomer works, is one of several voting system providers for states and local counties. They expected the company would face some blowback given the tenor of the 2020 campaigns, he said, but nothing like the targeted attacks that he and Dominion employees have faced.

As has been reported earlier, a marketing campaign claiming election fraud began to swirl even before the Nov. 3 election. By midnight of election night, unfounded voting fraud claims were already being made by President Donald Trump.

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Overnight, a wild array of claims about him and Dominion Voting Systems began to spread on social media (and on sites with names like Tiger Droppings, Godlike Productions, or Uncle Sam's Misguided Children). Trump weighed in, as did his grown children and lawyer Rudy Giuliani, citing both Dominion and calling out Coomer for creating machines that they said were switching thousands of votes.

Alt-right fanatics supporting Trump quickly focused on voting system employees, put a $1,000,000 bounty on Coomer's head, and say they began to turn up "proof" that there was a plot against Trump. Coomer published a guest editorial in *The Denver Post* not long after the election, refuting the baseless claims being made against him, Dominion Voting Systems and the election process.

Coomer spoke with *Ark Valley Voice* this past Friday while in hiding. As the Christmas holiday approaches, he can't go home.

He first wanted to debunk the claims. "The conspiratorial stuff just exploded… They are just making up stuff. It's insane. They say 'a lie travels halfway around the world before the truth puts its shoes on'."

Later in the interview, Coomer reiterated that his Facebook account was dormant for about three and a half in years, until the George Floyd murder. At that point he began posting here and there. He was not the author of the wild posts being circulated, and he doesn't even have a Twitter handle.

Asked why he might have become a target, Coomer said that the biggest reason is that while there are other vendors in the marketplace "we are a key vendor in some of those key battleground states. Our machines are used in counties that represent 60 percent of registered voters in Michigan. We're not as big in Wisconsin. In Pennsylvania we're a smaller player. If you look at Wisconsin and Pennsylvania, the [counties] they focused on for fraud aren't even our customers. We don't even serve Allegheny County [Pittsburgh] for instance. We do have a larger presence in Georgia and Arizona. That put us on the radar of these baseless claims."

"[These people] say they want the rest of my life to be miserable. And it has been. It has totally upended what I can and can't do. I'm very hesitant to go out in public. One upside of pandemic is everybody wears a mask. But these people have put out my personal address, my personal phone number. They know what vehicle I drive."

Coomer says he designed and built his house in the Central Colorado area because this is where he wanted to live, and the idea that he should fear for his life from Trump fanatics isn't just concerning, it feels like an alternate reality.

"I feel like I'm in bizarre-land – these people say some of the craziest things. I'm expected to respond to that …..what I wrote [the *Denver Post* piece] will not reach or change the minds of these crazies…They just dismiss it out of hand. It's not going to change their minds with

regular facts."

He wrote the piece, he says "because people who have known him for years, began to call saying 'what is going on?' I say — you should know me better than that. But they see so much and at some point they start to wonder if it's true."

Asked about the toll this is taking on him, Coomer, pauses and there is a catch in his throat. "On the upside I am single and I just have two cats. My brother is nearby, but with the pandemic we've been socially distanced."

He's sick at heart over the impact on his father, a West Point grad. "My father received a harassing letter in the mail calling me a traitor, telling him I'd be hung or spend the rest of my life in prison. My father is a decorated Bronze and Silver star; a Vietnam veteran." He added that even his father's West Point alumni groups were making statements against him.

Watch the full interview in the podcast below:

The Podcast interview of Dr. Eric Coomer by AVV Managing Editor Jan Wondra is a copyrighted product of *Ark Valley Voice*.

The personal toll is something else.

"I've experienced everything from anxiety attacks to bouts of depression over the last six or seven weeks. I am seeing a crisis counselor provided by the company, but it's hard, it's difficult. It has impacted my ability to do my job. I'm on leave from the company which makes it even harder. I don't even have a work schedule to occupy my time."

"I've been trying to find activities. This morning I skied. Otherwise I'd sit and ruminate on what has gone on. It's damaging my mental health and having an effect on my physical health. It's deep and long-lasting."

Coomer adds that this is on top of what the year has been like doing his job and traveling across the country as the pandemic has surged. "Election workers throughout the country showed up in a dangerous pandemic to ensure there were free and fair elections. I put my health at risk, working in a major city [Chicago] experiencing a huge surge in cases, I was there to do my job….not just me – all of us."

"There were people in the office I was supporting that came down with COVID. I was very concerned….we all took precautions, but you still run the risk." The idea that after risking his health to do his job that he would somehow influence the outcome, he says is beyond

insulting.

After the election, Coomer said he had to leave his home. He stayed in Chicago where he was working for two weeks after the election. Once he returned to Colorado, he went to a secure location and has stayed there.

That his own loyalty to democracy is being questioned he says is even more insulting to his reputation in the industry. “I’ve been in elections for 15 years. There is always someone out there [one or two], usually on the losing side – that make allegations that elections are rigged. I never expected for a sitting U.S. President to call into question my loyalty to the country.”

He added that if anything, he thought (not speaking on behalf of the company for which he works but only as a Dominion employee) that Trump’s followers would go after signature verification, not claim that the machines somehow had secret algorithms in them [they do not] that would change specific votes. He adds he never had broad discussions of risks of the election with Dominion as a company.

“The irony is – one of my key roles has been to champion transparency in the entire system,” he added, noting not just his product development record, but the technological mechanisms for third party verification built into the voting process. He pointed out the risk-limiting audit designs for the voting systems were designed here in Colorado working directly with county clerks. Dominion Voting Systems are used in 62 of the 64 Colorado counties.

The Dominion systems, say Coomer are efficient, secure, and should there be a question of voter intent, every single step of the vote process is logged and recorded, and subject to Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) requests. “The idea that this could be used to bulk transfer votes is ludicrous,” said Coomer. “The system works as one ballot at a time, and only a ballot that was identified as having something related to clarification of voter intent is touched. You can’t even touch any other ballot.”

It’s his reputation, says Coomer that may never recover from the voter fraud claims; every one of them having been disproved or thrown out of legal courts. On Friday, no less than Fox Business News host Lou Dobbs aired a segment refuting the voter fraud claims.

“Honestly I am still adjusting, I don’t know and I won’t know for a while, what my life looks like going forwards,” he says quietly. “At the same point my name is toxic because of all these baseless allegations. I don’t know how I recover that. I had a pretty solid reputation in the industry … I wasn’t at the forefront, but I would go to client’s conferences and had the support from both sides of the political spectrum.”

Asked if this hurts, Coomer sighed. “Oh, it’s horrible. My first response is to fight back. But these are not people that you can change their minds. They are literally making up lies. I tell them it’s not true, but they already know it because they made it up.”

Asked what this means to his career, Coomer says it's most likely over and he hasn't decided what, if any, legal actions he may take.

"Elections are very public things. I don't know if I can ever do this job again. I've spent the last 15 years building up this career, and it's not for the money. Elections don't have a lot of money; it's county and state budgets. We do everything we can with limited budgets. I don't do this job because of the money. I really believe it — I believe in the democratic process."

Asked what else *Ark Valley Voice* should have asked him, Coomer grew thoughtful. "I just wish more everyday people were more engaged in what is going on with this. This is not just an attack on me. It really is probably the most severe attack on our democracy and our democratic institutions."

We are not a democracy without trust in our elections," he added. "This is not me saying 'trust me.' It's good; we built the systems to be audited. It's trust but verify. We have always supported independent audits of not just the results, but all of our equipment. We submit these to independent test laboratories and to independent security researchers to evaluate. All of these baseless allegations are seriously eroding Americans' public's trust in elections. That's the most dangerous thing … even beyond the personal threats. While I do worry about my personal safety, I worry about our electoral process."

Visit https://arkvalleyvoice.com/on-edge/ to read more OnEdge interviews about people's struggles with the impacts of COVID-19 and their paths to overcome the challenges.

Editor's Note: Whatever you're going through, crisis counselors and professionally trained peer specialists are available to help. Call Colorado Crisis Service hotline at 1-844-493-TALK(8255). There is no wrong reason to reach out.

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